



The Old Ironsides Report

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Civil affairs soldiers provide home for displaced Iraqis

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372nd MPAD**

BAGHDAD, Iraq - - In a dusty corner of east Baghdad there is a community of families living in an old Iraqi military complex. The buildings in the compound are less like family housing and more like warehouses and offices. It's nothing new—since coalition forces entered the city, soldiers have found that there are thousands of families living in abandoned government buildings all over town.

However, the people living at this compound had been encouraged to move there—many had already been evicted from other government buildings, such as schools, fire departments, police stations and other government facilities that are now needed by the new Iraqi government.

The compound, which is named Hillsdale by U.S. soldiers, after Maj. Scott Hill, commander of A Detachment, 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, an Army Reserve unit from Danbury, Conn., is a temporary home for displaced Iraqis. Some are urban poor—people made homeless by unemployment and high rent—while others are internally displaced for political or other reasons.

The Iraqis living there have been invited to stay, in order to keep them off the streets. However, it's not a free ride. The residents of Hillsdale are allowed to live there only on a temporary basis, until they find employment and can afford to pay rent elsewhere.

The site was first found by soldiers from the 411th around the end of April this year. Spc. Frank O'Farrell, civil affairs specialist, 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, is one of the soldiers who helped organize the community at Hillsdale, which is located near the civil military operations center (CMOC) that the 411th operates behind the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad.

"We knew we could get involved with the civilians living there because it's so close to us," O'Farrell said.

"When we first got there, we found more unexploded ordnance than I've ever seen in one place," he said. "There were piles of C4 (explosives), dynamite, grenades, mortars, land mines, artillery shells, .50 caliber machine guns, and thousands of rounds of anti-aircraft ammunition."

The weapons and ammo were piled in the center of the compound and scattered throughout many of the buildings there. Explosive ordnance disposal soldiers and engineers worked around the clock to clear the area of these hazardous munitions.

Around the beginning of August, the civil affairs soldiers returned to the site to assess the conditions at Hillsdale—to achieve "positive control" over the population.

O'Farrell and the other soldiers on his team asked people living there a series of questions to determine who the heads of the families are, how many people are in each family, where they are from, why they were forced to move there, what their skills are, and whether they are currently employed.

The questionnaire is part of the displaced citizen registration that the civil affairs soldiers use to create a database to streamline the assistance they provide to Iraqis who need it.

Part of the need for registration is to eliminate corruption in the community. O'Farrell and the other soldiers have found evidence that some people are abusing the system. Some people are taking advantage of living there rent-free, but are employed and can afford to live elsewhere.

Some residents there have also claimed that there are people who are demanding rent for allowing others to move into their assigned living space. Essentially, they are sub-leasing property that they haven't even paid for, and have no right to charge rent.

Though these problems are not widespread within the Hillsdale compound, it is difficult for the civil affairs team of about six soldiers to regulate a community of 150 families, which is somewhere between 700 and 900 people.



Spc. Beatrice Navarro, civil affairs specialist, 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, an Army Reserve unit from Danbury, Conn., and Maj. Scott Caldwell, deputy director for civil affairs, 1st Armored Division, sign up Iraqis to clear away trash and rubble at Hillsdale Aug. 10.

Therefore, the soldiers are working to turn Hillsdale over to Iraqi authorities. The families on the compound will choose representatives for a committee that will report to the local neighborhood advisory council.

"We want the Iraqis to be able to work out their problems themselves," O'Farrell said.

The committee will be able to address the community issues to civil affairs units and non-governmental organizations, as well as to the local neighborhood advisory council, in order to achieve resolution.

The problems the people living at Hillsdale face range from water and electricity outages to unemployment and getting local ration cards. Many of the people living there moved there from other parts of Baghdad and have ration cards that have addresses from other parts of the city. Without updating the cards, many of the people living there would have to travel across town to receive food.

On Aug. 11, 17 families moved in at Hillsdale. They were bussed with their belongings from the Kadhimyah patrol station in north Baghdad, where they were living. Because that facility is needed by the Iraqi police, the families had to be evicted. Rather than throwing them out on the street, however, U.S. Army civil affairs soldiers gave them the option of moving to Hillsdale.

To prepare the site for the incoming families, as well as improve it for those already living there, engineers from the 203rd Engineer Battalion, a Missouri Army National Guard unit from Joplin, Mo., came to clear away much of the garbage and rubble that was left on the grounds of Hillsdale August 10.

O'Farrell and other civil affairs soldiers hired local Iraqis who live in the compound to help clean, while the engineers used their dump trucks and other equipment to remove most of the debris—which turned into a two-day project due to the amount of garbage on the ground. The engineers also dug burn pits to be used for disposing of garbage until the facility receives dumpsters.

The plan for Hillsdale is organized into several projects to renovate the facilities. Developing a system for relocating displaced citizens, rather than simply evicting them to live on the streets, will prevent a humanitarian crisis, Caldwell said. Keeping people off the streets and allowing the new government to regain control of government buildings and facilities in Baghdad will work out in everyone's best interest.

NEWS

Powell Heads to Iraq to Assess Efforts

GENEVA (AP) - Secretary of State Colin Powell is getting a firsthand look at the situation in Iraq, assessing reconstruction efforts and the development of democracy after the U.S.-led war that ended the presidency of Saddam Hussein. The visit is believed to be the first by an American secretary of state since the period more than 40 years ago when Iraq was a pro-Western monarchy.

Indiana Gov. Frank O'Bannon Dies at 73

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) - Frank O'Bannon, who parlayed down-home southern Indiana charm and consensus-building ability into mixed success as his state's governor since 1997, died Saturday, five days after suffering a stroke. He was 73. O'Bannon, who fell ill Monday while attending a conference in Chicago, died at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, press secretary Mary Dieter said.

Schwarzenegger Woos GOP at Convention

LOS ANGELES (AP) - California Republicans gathered for their state convention Saturday amid intensifying calls for the party to unite behind one of its two major candidates in the campaign to replace Gov. Gray Davis. Arnold Schwarzenegger's supporters are trying to persuade party members to rally behind their candidate, who leads state Sen. Tom McClintock in the polls. But McClintock is favored by the party's conservative base, which worries about Schwarzenegger's more moderate social views on issues such as abortion and domestic partnerships.

South Korea Typhoon Kills 62; 25 Missing

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) - The most powerful typhoon ever to ever hit South Korea flipped over a floating hotel, twisted massive cranes, killed at least 62 people and left another 25 missing Saturday. Typhoon Maemi lashed the southeastern coast with 135-mph winds Friday night before subsiding into a tropical storm Saturday morning. Nearly 25,000 people fled to shelters as the storm dumped 17.8 inches of rain in some places, triggering landslides and floods, the government's anti-disaster office said.

Chaplain's thought for the day: *A Mind to Work*

So we built the wall . . . , for the people had a mind to work.
--Nehemiah 4:6

Some people, like the comic strip character Beetle Bailey, work hard to avoid working. In real life, we know that work "makes the world go round." God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden "to tend and keep it" (Gen. 2:15), which shows us that work is essential to our well-being. God wants us to work, and He wants us to put our hearts into what we do. But how can a person put his heart into a job that is drearily monotonous, or so stressful that it brings on high blood pressure or ulcers? The apostle Paul gave these answers: "Work with your own hands, . . . that you may lack nothing" (1 Th. 4:11-12). To another church he wrote, "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men" (Col. 3:23). If you think of your work as a blessing and that your diligence is honoring to the Lord you too will have "a mind to work" (Neh. 4:6).

Work becomes worship when you work for the Lord.

SPORTS

Brian France Named NASCAR Chairman, CEO

LOUDON, N.H. (AP) - Brian France was appointed NASCAR's board chairman and chief executive Saturday, replacing his father, Bill France Jr. The elder France will cut back on his daily business activities, but will remain co-vice chairman and an active member of the board of directors.

Oddly Enough...


Monkey Nut Nudger Reaches End of a Hard Road


LONDON (Reuters) - A British man who has been nudging a monkey nut along the streets of London with his nose for 11 days finally reached the seat of power on Friday. After seven grueling miles, Mark McGowan pushed the nut up the steps to Prime Minister Tony Blair's Downing Street residence and told waiting reporters: "I've got a sore nose." Performance artist McGowan -- nose shielded by a grimy sticking plaster -- deftly flicked the nut onto Blair's front step, and was greeted by an official who handed him a mug of tea. The 37-year old has gone through 13 nuts during his grueling quest to highlight rising student debt. "I'm trying to show the Prime Minister that he needs to bring back grants to people who need them," he told Sky television. "I've got 15,000 pounds worth of debts -- and now I've got a sore nose," he added. McGowan, who has previously walked for 11 miles with a turkey strapped to his head to persuade fat people to eat less, was unimpressed by the tea he received from the premier's office. "It was like a builder's mug -- you could see the stain on the inside," he said. But the mug was nothing to some of the trials he has to endure during his stunt. "The streets of London are filthy," he said. "There's human hair, bird poo and all sorts." And for victory celebrations? "I'm just going to have a bath," he said.


This Day in History *September 14th 1812*


One week after winning a bloody victory over the Russian army at the Battle of Borodino, Napoleon Bonaparte's Grande Armée enters the city of Moscow, only to find the population evacuated and the Russian army retreated again. Moscow was the goal of the invasion, but the deserted city held no czarist officials to sue for peace and no great stores of food or supplies to reward the French soldiers for their long march. Then, just after midnight, fires broke out across the city, apparently set by Russian patriots, leaving Napoleon's massive army with no means to survive the coming Russian winter.


Saturday College Football


Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	Arkansas	14	7	7	10	38	
	Texas (5)	7	7	0	14	28	


Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	Purdue	3	10	0	3	16	
	Wake Forest (21)	3	7	0	0	10	


Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	Ball State	0	14	0	7	21	
	Pittsburgh (12)	0	14	21	7	42	


Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	Massachusetts	7	0	0	0	7	
	Kansas State (6)	3	21	7	7	38	


Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	Notre Dame (14)	0	0	0	0	0	
	Michigan (7)	7	10	7	14	38	


Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	Washington State	20	3	24	0	47	
	Colorado (17)	6	7	6	7	26	


Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	Florida A&M	3	0	0	0	3	
	Florida (20)	14	21	7	21	63	


Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	UNLV	10	6	7	0	23	
	Wisconsin (15)	0	5	0	0	5	


Final in 3rd OT		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	T	
	N.C. State (22)	0	7	0	17	14	38	
	Ohio State (3)	14	0	3	7	20	44	

Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	UNLV	10	6	7	0	23	
	Wisconsin (15)	0	5	0	0	5	

Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	Fresno State	0	0	7	21	28	
	Oklahoma (1)	16	22	0	14	52	

Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	South Carolina	0	0	0	7	7	
	Georgia (8)	10	7	7	7	31	

Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	Hawaii	3	3	7	19	32	
	USC (4)	3	28	21	9	61	

Final		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	T	
	East Carolina	0	0	3	0	3	
	Miami (2)	7	10	0	21	38	